



HMIE

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Falkirk Council to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School and realign its catchment to Beancross Primary School.

April 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from HMIE has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by Falkirk Council to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School and realign its catchment to Beancross Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers. There are special provisions that apply to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 17 March 2026 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Beancross Primary School and Grangemouth High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Bothkennar Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Falkirk Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The public consultation ran from 23 February to 24 April 2026. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and on the council website. A public meeting was held on 17 March 2026 at Bothkennar Primary School. One local resident attended the meeting and shared views that Bothkennar Primary School was previously a successful small school and its closure was a loss to the local community. The local resident recognised the reducing roll and small numbers made it impractical for the school to remain open.

2.3 The council received five responses to the online survey and by email. Two out of the three responses to the online survey expressed agreement with the proposal. Only one of the email responses indicated clearly that they disagreed with the closure of the school. The main areas of concern related to the future use of the existing school building, a view that children in the area should have been allocated to a different primary school, and a view that the consultation document does not recognise fully the positive features of education being provided in a small school context.

2.4 The council also consulted with children in P5 to P7 who attend Beancross Primary School to seek their views on the proposal. Through this process, almost all children shared that they are happy attending Beancross Primary School. They also offered interesting suggestions in relation to the future use of the Bothkennar Primary School building if it were to close.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Falkirk Council mothballed Bothkennar Primary School in August 2019. The school roll declined for a prolonged period of time and dropped to four pupils during session 2018–2019. Since then, children who would have attended the school have been reallocated to the catchment area of Beancross Primary School.

3.2 In 2021, Falkirk Council undertook a statutory consultation and the Education, Children and Young People Executive agreed to a permanent closure of the school. Scottish Ministers referred the decision to the Schools Closure Review Panel. The Panel concluded that the council had not fully complied with the preliminary requirements set out in Section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. As a result, the closure was not approved. The council was required to reconsider alternatives and undertake a fresh statutory consultation. Falkirk Council have since undertaken a preliminary community engagement under section 12A of the Act.

3.3 As the primary aged population in the catchment areas has not increased, nor is there evidence that it will increase in the future, the council now proposes again to permanently close Bothkennar Primary School. The catchment area of Beancross Primary School would be changed permanently to reflect this.

3.4 The council has outlined several educational benefits within the proposal in relation to learning and teaching, educational outcomes, experiences and opportunities, and the environment for learning. HM Inspectors believe that the council has demonstrated the educational benefits

successfully within the proposal. HM Inspectors agree that there is sufficient merit to consider the permanent closure of the school.

3.5 All stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors were in favour of closing Bothkennar Primary School. They recognise the benefits of children attending Beancross Primary School. Staff and children report that children are benefitting from increased opportunities to develop social and interpersonal skills by working in classes of their own age group. Staff at Beancross Primary School provide children with well-planned individual, paired, group and whole class tasks and activities. Staff talk confidently about how the needs of learners are met well within the current arrangements. Children who spoke to HM Inspectors value regular opportunities to share their views in order to influence their learning and to identify improvements to their school. They regularly adopt a range of leadership roles which are more accessible in a larger school context. These extend to running clubs for peers, planning events such as a whole-school talent contest and introducing a school newspaper designed to share school news and pupil achievements. They enjoy acting as 'buddies' to younger peers, including those in the nursery.

3.6 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. The council has continued to monitor the pupil roll at the school and engage with the school community. There are sound reasons to consider the long term viability of the school. The overwhelming messages about children's experiences in Beancross Primary School are positive. The council has consulted and considered reasonable alternatives to the closure of the school, including the re-opening of the school and the re-opening of the school with an extended catchment area. There is consensus across stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors that these options are not viable and would not result in educational benefits to children.

3.7 Almost all members of the local community accept the rationale for the school closure. They would like the existing school building to continue to be used purposefully and to ensure it does not fall into disrepair. Travelling arrangements for children will continue with free transport provided for the relatively short travel distance of between two and three miles.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are clear educational benefits for closing Bothkennar Primary School and for children to continue their education at Beancross Primary School. Children benefit from positive learning experiences at the school. They benefit from learning and socialising with larger peer groups, and access to a wide range of achievement experiences and leadership opportunities provided in the larger school. Almost all stakeholders who engaged with the consultation process agree with the council's proposal. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to communicate with the local community to explore plans for the future use of the school building.

HM Inspectors
April 2026

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland